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On the Bench-ice of Thirty-mile River.

A WINTER JOURNEY TO THE KLONDYKE WITH A GLIMPSE OF THE MINES

By Frederick Palmer

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR



"Dude"

ORIGINALLY, I had intended to accompany our Government expedition for the relief of the miners of the Klondyke which was in part mobilized at Dyea when I arrived there late in February. As it never went any farther, for the good reason that Dawson had been saved from famine by the migration of a portion of its population, I was left to my own resources. Wholesome fatigue and clean camps on the snow were better than the hospitality of a mushroom town built of rough boards and tar-paper; a little adventure was better than watching for two months the thousands of pilgrims of fortune in the desperate and monotonous labor of putting

their outfits over the passes: and I determined, rather than wait with them for the opening of navigation, to undertake, with dogs and sleds of my own, the untried journey of six hundred miles over the ice-fields of the Lewes lakes and the ice-packs of the Yukon River, which the Government expedition had contemplated.

Whoever was to go with me must be companionable, industrious, and loyal. I must work as hard as he; for we could not carry food for a stomach which nourished idle hands. In pitching a tent in a storm, when limbs ached from the strain of the day's tramp, an unruly temper might lead to the crisis of blows or separation.

Precisely the right kind of a comrade, equipped with experience, I had hoped would be forthcoming from among the men who had violated the traditions of the early communities of gold-seekers in re-

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Packers Resting in the Niches Cut in the Snow at the Side of the Trail.

guard to winter travel. Some members of this hardy little army were arriving almost daily in Dyea from Dawson. But their dogs were worn out, and they themselves were inclined to laugh at my suggestion, more particularly at my money. Having pointed out the greater difficulties of ingress than of egress, they asked, with a touch of sarcasm, if I thought that they had made the journey out for the purpose of immediately retracing their steps.

Meanwhile, adventurous spirits but lately arrived from Pacific Coast ports came to offer their services with all the self-confidence characteristic of a floating population. The references of some were belied by their demeanor, and the demeanor of others by their references. All were further belied by their dogs—Newfoundlands, setters, and what not—which had received a few days' training for market purposes in Seattle. In consequence, I was almost despairing, when there appeared a powerfully built, blond-haired, blue-eyed fellow, who impressed his personality upon me at once.

"I hear you're lookin' for a dog-puncher," he said, awkwardly. "My name's Jack Beltz. I've been a cowboy and done a good many other things in the West, and now I'm up against it with the crowd in Alaska. I think I could do what you want"—and then with sudden fervor—"but come around and look at the dogs!

If the dogs are no good, you don't want me, that's sure."

"Any further references?"

"Well," after a moment's thought, "there's Bangs, up at the Miner's Rest. He knowed me when I was on a ranch in Nebraska. Dunno what he'll say. You can ask him, though. Anyhow, I'd be obliged if you'd see the dogs 'fore you make a decision."

He waited outside the Miner's Rest while I spoke with Bangs.

"Jack Beltz!" exclaimed Bangs. "Well, Jack Beltz's a fool when it comes to hosses and dawgs. He thinks

they can talk. But Jack Beltz'll stick to a thing that's hard—he don't like things that ain't—till he comes out of it or goes down with it, and all the mules in the army couldn't make him mad."

Then I followed Jack to a wood-pile in the outskirts of the town, where five fat and sleek huskies awoke at his approach, and at his command lined up like so many soldiers, wagging their bushy tails over their backs and watching his every move-



A Near View of the Line of Packers.

From

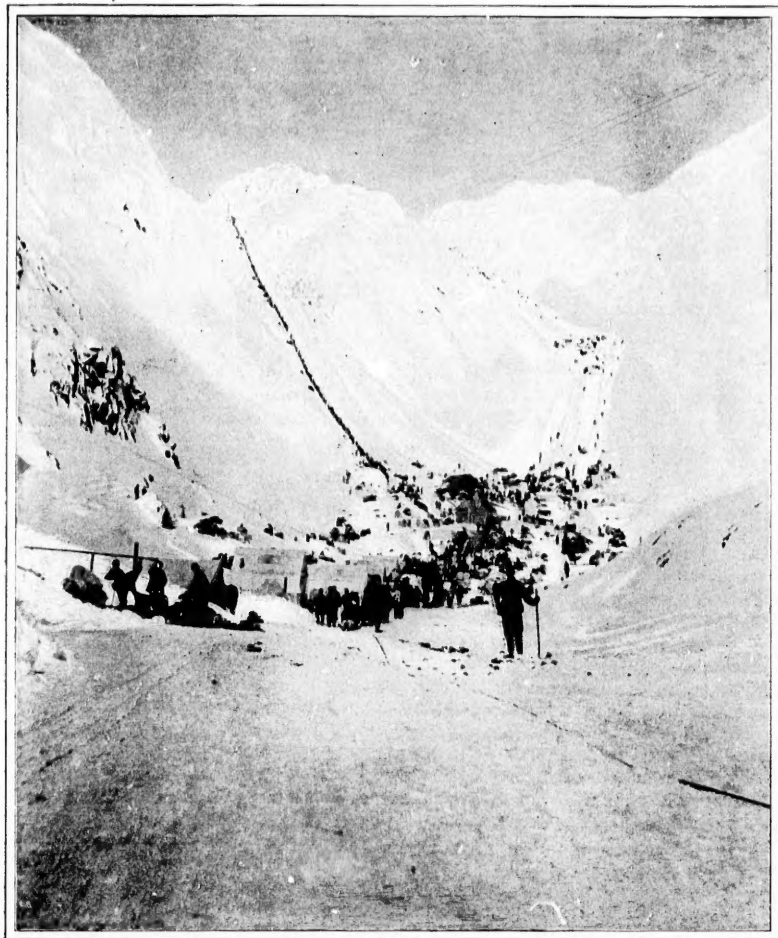
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Chilcoat Pass.

From photograph taken by Lieutenant-Colonel David L. Brainard. The dark spots to the left of the line of packers on the trail are groups of men resting, as shown in the picture on the top of page 466.

ment with their sharp eyes. From their mothers, who were native Indian dogs, they had inherited their affection for man—however poor the specimen—and from their fathers, who were full-blooded wolves of the forest, their strength and endurance.

In an hour after I had met him I had engaged Jack Beltz on the strength of the fat on his dogs' ribs, of his blue eyes, and of Bangs's candid recommendation. Plac-

ing my theoretical knowledge of the needs of an Arctic climate against his experience as a frontiersman, we quickly made out a list of the supplies which were to be packed on our sleds, minimizing everything in weight and bulk as far as we dared, but being very careful to consider that while we might go hungry the dogs must not. In all, we took eleven hundred pounds, four hundred of food and bedding for ourselves



The City of Caches at the Summit of the Pass.

and seven hundred of food for the dogs. Jack was to prepare this outfit with all speed, and meet me on the summit of Chilcoot Pass two days later. For we had no time to spare if, as the old-timers said, the river became impassable for sleds by the last week in April. The ocean winds, already thawing the snow on the seaward side of the divide, lent evidence to their opinion.

Chance made the choice of a third member of the party, whose assistance was necessary, as happy as the choice of its second. This big fellow, over six feet in height, was Frederick Gamble, known to his friends as Fritz, who had given up a career as an artist, and had already spent one unprofitable season with a pick and a pack in the Cassiar district. He had a taste for all the fine dishes of Upper Bohemianism, but no pilgrim who ever followed the rainbow's end accepted a diet of bacon and beans with better philosophy.

It is not my purpose here to describe Chilcoot Pass—least of all, the trail and

ascent leading up to it; but I will say that, if you wish to see it, you have only to imagine a broad incline at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, seven hundred feet in height, running between two snowy peaks at its summit, with men in the foreground bending under the weight of heavy packs, and gradually growing smaller as they ascend until, finally, they seem like ants dangerously near toppling over with their loads, though, to your relief and amazement, crawling off the white blanket into the sky.

On the little plateau at the summit were piled hundreds of pilgrims' outfits, separated one from another by narrow paths, making the whole seem like a city in miniature. Buried under the seventy feet of snow which had fallen during the winter were two other such cities which their owners hoped to recover in the summer. Beyond, floated a large British flag over the little block-house where the British Northwest Mounted Police had established themselves to collect customs and to see that no one not having a special permit

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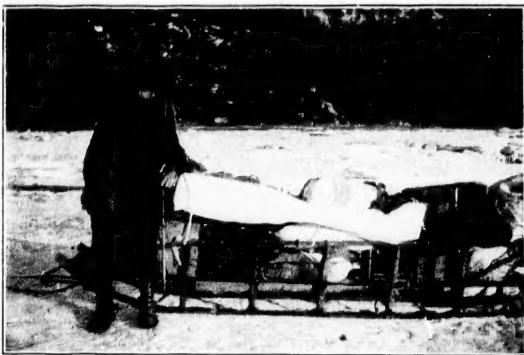
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entered Canadian territory with less than a year's supply of food.

Jack labored for two hours in bringing up the dogs with the empty sleds, while our goods came on the backs of the ants who charged three cents a pound for the service. Aside from the five huskies hitched to a large basket-sled, we had two St. Bernards, "Patsy" and "Tim," who were born in the country, and duly christened.



Jack with Our Sled Packed Ready for the Start from Dyea.



Carrying Timbers for Boat Building up the Pass.

wore moccasins as well, and maintained his footing easily. Fortunately for the novice, there are three small lakes—at the time they were three fields of snow—in the nine miles from the summit to Linderman, and he could take advantage of the respite when he was trotting across these to think out, in the hard-and-fast civilized manner, how to avoid his frequent loss of equilibrium. The night we spent at Linderman in Jack's own camp.

Thus, in a day, we had passed over the only portion of our journey on land, and

tened and acclimatized there. With "Patsy" and "Tim," and my hand on the "gee-pole" by which the sled is guided, I went under fire for the first time in descending on the inland side of the pass. Man and sled were put *hors de combat* again and again, while the dogs, who managed to keep erect, looked back on me with professional disgust. I wanted to blame my misfortunes to my moccasins, but Jack



On their Way Out from Dawson.



Propelling Sleds by Sails just Above White Horse Cañon.

we were henceforth, as Jack put it gayly, to proceed downhill with the current of the river at the rate of eight inches to the mile, which is fast enough as currents go, but rather poor coasting. The course of the Yukon through the heart of Alaska is in a semicircle, with one end at the coast and the other end as near to the coast as the headwaters of a stream might be, unless it could flow on the level. Once he has reached the lakes, the prospector may float for 2,600 miles to Behring Sea, and but for this one of the two friendly deeds of Nature in Alaska—the other is abundant firewood—it is questionable if the gold in the Klondyke would have been discovered in our generation. De Soto's exploring party would have had a similar advantage if the Mississippi had risen within thirty-two miles of Cape Hatteras, and they would have needed it if the valley of the Mississippi were like the valley of the Yukon.

In harnessing our dogs at dawn, as we looked out across Lake Linderman, the only color in sight in the vast expanse of white were the needle-like fir-trees, cropping

through the snow on the mountain-sides, and the outlines of a few pilgrims in advance of the main body, already astir, dragging their sleds on to Lake Bennett, where, with whip-saws, hammers, nails,



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oakum, and pitch, was to be built out of the forests the unique and variegated flotilla which was to line the river-banks in front of Dawson in May and June. Jack snapped the long lash of his whip, shook the "gee-pole" to free the runners, cried "Mush!"—a peculiarly Saxon contraction of the "*Marchons!*" brought into the country along with many other words by the French Canadians—and seven gallant, four-footed comrades and three figures in parkees looking like hooded night-shirts

skin. When Jack halted the dogs for our first and our worst camp, whose only consolation was a water-hole that had been made by some pilgrim, they set up a howl of knowing delight.

With the snow up to my waist, I cut firewood out of the abundance of dead timber, and then cut green spruce-boughs, which, when laid tufts upward on the snow that was packed down as a floor for our 7 X 7 tent, made a soft bed. Then I went for a pail of water and brought in my



Lashing the Sleds in the Morning.

began in earnest their journey over the trail hardened by the pilgrims' footsteps. By the wayside we passed "caches" of waterproof bags, one of which was at either end of a pilgrim's route of daily toil in moving his outfit forward by relays; while his own ambition made him undergo longer hours and greater strain than he, a free citizen (U. S. A.), would have endured for any other master.

Linderman is only four miles long, and we were soon on Bennett, where the afternoon brought, in sharp contrast to the keen atmosphere of the morning, a blowing storm of moist snow which wet us to the

sleeping-bag, and my work was done. The air had cleared suddenly, and the weather had turned so cold that my parkee had frozen as stiff as a board. I pulled it off, substituted dry moccasins and socks for my wet ones, left the rest of my clothes to be dried by the warmth of my body, and then, huddling myself up with my sleeping-bag as a seat, I watched my comrades finishing their allotted tasks.

Fritz, who had been chosen cook, was sitting with one leg on either side of the little sheet-iron stove, smoking a cigarette and making flapjacks. Outside, by the light of the crackling blaze, I could see



Making Trail on the Last Day of the Journey.

Jack stirring something in a pan over a roaring fire with a big ladle that he had whittled out of a sapling. Weirdly presiding over this operation, their bodies in shadow and their wolf-noses thrust forward with epicurean relish, were the huskies. Jack fed them only once a day, and then all that they could eat of tallow, bacon, cornmeal and rice, thoroughly boiled in the form of a porridge. When he took the pan off the fire he put it, safely covered, in the snow to cool, while the dogs mounted guard over it, glaring at one another; and then he came to sit on his own bed, and together we ate by the light of a candle hanging by a piece of wire from the top of the tent. As I had my granite-ware plate filled with beans the second time and took my fourth flapjack—a flapjack an inch thick and seven inches in diameter—a twinkle came into Jack's eyes.

"I like to see a man in earnest," he said.

Then he relighted his pipe and went back to his dogs. Having filled a two-quart tin pan for each of them, with the ardor of a child he heaped more timber on the dying fire and, turning his back to the

cheerful glow, began a technical conversation on the state of the trail with sleek old "Dude," the leader of the team.

Later, when he returned to the tent, the dogs were so many balls of fur, their noses snuggled under their bushy tails. If two feet of snow should fall during the night it would not disturb the serenity of their slumbers, and in the morning at the call to harness they would dig their way out, shake themselves, and be ready for duty. Jack explained, as he pulled off his moccasins, that they had eaten only half their usual rations. Having been treated to beefsteak in Dyea by their generous owner, they rather resented marching fare; but they would come down to it as soon as they felt the pangs of hunger, he added.

"Are you tired?" I asked him.

"Me? No," he drawled.

He filled up the stove—he must always have a fire of some kind going—and, leaning back on his robe, his hands behind his head, he looked up at the top of the tent dreamily. He was still in this attitude when I crawled into my sleeping-bag and quickly fell asleep. The sleeping-bag did

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well enough for that night, but I soon repented of it. With no opportunity for airing it properly, it readily collected moisture and became as uncomfortable as a coating of ice. After I had been kept awake for a night by the colder weather that followed the storm, I ripped it open and used the furs as a robe, which, with the assistance of a heavy blanket, kept me as warm as toast, though when I awoke there was a glacial path through the space I had left open for breathing.

The first one to awake in the morning crawled half-way out of his robe, and, dexterously leaning over, put the coffee-pot on the stove and made the fire out of the kindlings which were always ready. To dress was to put on your footwear which had been drying—if it had not been burning—before the stove. Then the robes and blankets were rolled up and strapped to serve as seats for breakfast, and you stepped outside into the invigorating air and did what you might in the way of cleanliness. For my part, I washed my hands in the snow, using soap liberally, with astonishingly efficacious results. After breakfast we had to pack all the things that we had unpacked the night before back on the sleds and lash them.

On the Lewes lakes, and the streams which join them in a chain, one day was quite like another, with the exception of a single event of importance to ourselves. At daybreak we were on the level trail, now trotting and then walking, until our stomachs cried halt. On three occasions we had luncheon in the tents of pilgrims who, not having been able to bring their supplies over the pass in the rush of the previous autumn before winter was at hand, were making for the foot of Lake Le Barge, to take advantage of the three weeks by which the clearing of the ice in the river precedes the clearing of the ice in the lakes. While his partner was dragging his sled, one of our hosts was suffering in his tent the torture of snow-blindness, as the penalty of having gone for a day without glasses. Another host, an old Dane from San Francisco, had no companion, not even a dog.

"Sometime I do get mad," he said, "when the sled pull so hard, and I say, 'Yohn, you are a big tool to start for Klondyke when you are sixty-nine.' But we do

not like to gif up. Nefer do we get so old we tank it too late to make a fortune. If a man know as he would drop dead on top of the pass, I tank a man go on to see the t'ing out. I make a fortune t'ree time, and efery time I haf many pad lucks—yes, very many pad lucks. Sometime I get lonely, and then I say, 'Yohn, there is your wife, there is your shildren; it is Sunday dinner, and you are home with a pile of gold.'"

How we relished the ham that we had brought with us for luncheon, followed by the perfect relaxation which comes with good digestion and physical fatigue, glorified by a pipe, before we arose and turned our steps toward the brown line of sled-track which stretched out over the expanse of white until growing darkness made it dim, and Jack began to look out for the first favorable place for a camp!

The important event which I have mentioned caused two weeks' delay at a time when we felt the need of every day to complete our journey, and I accept the awkward responsibility for it. At White Horse Cañon we were offered the hospitality of a large cabin with a kitchen in one end and bunk-room in the other, occupied by some workmen engaged in building a tramway around the rapids. Jack suggested that we stop here for a day, because the dogs needed rest, he said, but really on my account, I think. I had contracted a bad cough, and my legs ached like two great teeth. In the afternoon I lay down on the cook's bunk, and toward evening Fritz started down the trail to a distant camp to find a doctor who had turned pilgrim of fortune. Meanwhile, Jake, the cook, dosed me with tea made of sage that he had gathered on the mountain-side.

"Your pulse is up to a hundred and ten," the Doctor said; "but all that you've got is a plain, old-fashioned case of measles. You must have caught them in Dyea, and you've greatly exaggerated them by physical strain."

My comrades put up a tent in another cabin which still wanted doors and windows, thus insuring a soft light for the protection of my eyes, which, the Doctor feared, might be affected. They nailed some saplings together for a bedstead, and were so ingenious in many ways, so kind

in keeping the temperature the same night and day, and in attending to my wants generally, that I felt like a king in his private hospital. Jake came in every day to make sure that I was taking the doses of sage-tea that he sent in morning, noon, and night; while the big workmen came in to hint that I must not let Jake have his own way too much. And I lay on my back and thought of two things—strawberries and pineapples. I would have given all my wealth for either, but not a five-cent piece for a pear.

My convalescence was not so dull as I sat on a bench in the kitchen, learning, under Jake's tutelage, how to cook oatmeal properly, how to bake bread and to make good pies out of dried apples, and listening to him expound his ideas of the world. He was a great cynic. If you believed in one thing, he was sure to believe in the other. One of his favorite remarks with which he baited me was that "everybody is out for the stuff; there ain't no honor nowadays; and you don't catch me missin' any dollars." His boarders excused him by saying, "Any cook that's been in a minin'-camp or a lumber-camp is always a blisterin' crank." On the morning of my departure I held out a bill to Jake in partial remuneration for what he had done for me. He stirred the contents of a pot this way and that, viciously, without replying. I protested, and then he growled:

"Gwan! What d'ye take me for?"

As I waved him a good-by he called out:

"Young feller, you're all right, but you won't argue."

In two days we were at the foot of Lake Le Barge, and on the second day we had travelled thirty-five miles, which made the dogs very unfit for service on the day following.

It took us all of two days' hard work to go from the foot of Le Barge to the junction of the Hootalinqua over a portion of the Yukon known from its length as Thirty Mile River, and certainly worthy of some distinction on account of other characteristics. Many more boats of the pilgrims' flotilla were wrecked in the spring on its hidden rocks than in the White Horse Rapids, which, I may add, have received undue celebrity. If an average

temperature of thirty degrees below zero continues for several weeks, the current may freeze over, but rarely is there more than bench ice along the shores; and this, owing to the increasingly moderate weather and the falling water, was fast breaking away in huge cakes which fell into the stream with a splash. Over that which remained, slippery, sometimes sloping toward the river at a considerable angle, and often only a foot or two in breadth, we must make our way. When there was no footing below the sled, we attached one end of a rope to it, wrapped the other end around our waists, and if one of us slipped and fell in the soft snow of the steep hill-side above, luckily the others maintained their hold and were able to prevent both sleds and dogs from going into the river and putting an end to our little expedition there and then.

Near Hootalinqua the current slackens, and we crossed where it was completely frozen over. Above us was a great jam of the cakes that had floated down, and some of them rumbled under our feet, came out in an open place below, and then went on to form another jam. A few minutes later there was a boom, and our bridge moved downstream with the noise of a medley of bass drums. At noon on this day the sun had made the trail so soft that we sank into it up to our knees. We halted a little later, determined to start at one o'clock in the morning and take advantage of the crust frozen during the night; and we had what seemed at the time the good fortune to put up in a cabin which had been abandoned by the Mounted Police. Having had an early dinner, we were thinking of bed at six o'clock when two ragged men, their faces blackened by cooking over camp-fires, came in. They sat down, and when they had eaten with the heartiness of famished beings some things that we had left on the table, one of them, whom his companion called "the Doctor," became explanatory:

"You mustn't mind our appetites," he said. "We've just come from Dawson. My pardner there, Yukon Bill, hain't been out of the country for eight years. Go easy there, Bill! Your manners are bad."

"Shut up!" roared Bill, looking as wild as a hungry lynx.

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ued the Doctor. "Jim was a sight uglier 'n Bill, an' you can see what Bill is. He took his share of the bacon on his back an' started out for himself this mornin'."

"No packin' fer me! We kept the dogs, you bet, by ——" put in Bill through a mouthful.

Jim arrived three hours later. Without paying any attention to the presence of other persons, he dropped his pack as if it were of lead, fell down on the bench, pushed back his unkempt hair, and looked vacantly at the stove.

It was plain enough that the minds of all three of our visitors, especially Jim, had been affected by the hardships that they had endured on their long tramp, with only snow, trees, dogs, and their own quarrels for companionship. Most of these grim travellers whom we met coming out from Dawson—now and then one was limping from scurvy—had neither tent nor stove, quite inadequate robes, no dishes except skillets and cups, and no food except bacon, flour, and beans, and not always beans. Earlier in the winter they put up a barrier of boughs against the wind, and slept b'ween two great fires, kept up by the member of the party whose night it was on watch.

At eleven o'clock we slept for half an hour, only to be awakened by the arrival of another equally worn-out party, and almost the last one from Dawson that we met. By the time we were fairly asleep again these tired beings set the cabin on fire, and Jack, in his good-natured way, put the flames out for them.

At daylight I was awakened by Fritz, who was grumbling to himself about the audacity and the stomachs that some people must have. I arose to see him looking into two empty pails which he had left full of apple-sauce and beans.

"I was hungry as a dog in the night," the Doctor explained, a little later, "and I couldn't help it."

Fritz replied by looking daggers at him. Then he offered a pair of snowshoes to Fritz as an olive-branch.

"If I thought that what you've eaten would make you downright sick, I'd take 'em," said Fritz.

"'Twon't," replied the Doctor, in all honesty. "Nothin' makes me sick." And he gave the snow-shoes to Jack, whose eyes

were twinkling in appreciation of the conversation.

As we started out, five or six hours later than we had planned, we resolved to eschew cabins hereafter. We had not done a half-day's work when a heavy, wet snow-storm, and the condition of the dogs compelled us to rest.

"Wear 'em out," said Jack, "and it's all up, anyway. We'll boil some beans and lay up some sleep ahead against a better trail."

Accordingly, dogs and men slept for thirteen hours.

So little did it freeze at night that the sun, now rising at four o'clock, soon thawed the crust. The Big Salmon was already open, its current destroying the trail, and leaving a field of slush with many places too deep for passage for a distance of five or six miles, which was as wearing on the dogs as a full day's journey under ordinary circumstances. We only hoped that the Big Salmon was alone in its enmity to our plans, for once the ice is out of the tributaries, the ice in the Yukon cannot last long. It seemed to be imperative that, in order to take full advantage of the slight crust which formed, we should travel nights. We made this experiment once, starting out at 10 P.M., and once was quite enough.

The thawing snow had fallen away from the path which was hardened by travel from Dawson, and therefore the better resisted the sun's rays, but when frozen was as slippery as ice. In so far as you were able to keep the sled from slewing on this razor's back, that much you aided the dogs. At intervals you walked outside the trail, plunging with every step through the crust down to the slush underneath, while, with body bent and arm extended with all the rigidity at your command, you endeavored to hold the lurching "gee-pole" steady. Early in the evening the great darkness seemed the more dense to vision strained by the sun beating on the expanse of snow by day. With their eyes bloodshot and almost closed by snow-blindness, the St. Bernards continually stumbled and fell as they leaped from one side of the trail to the other, blindly and vainly seeking a better footing. When we rested we dug holes in the crust, and throwing ourselves prostrate, drank our fill. At first, I tried

to use a telescopic drinking-cup; but soon I regarded it as tawdry, inefficient, and unworthy of the occasion, and followed the more robust custom of Jack, who enjoyed to the full the pleasure of having made a convert. For one who had left White Horse with a bad cough on the heels of the measles, such indulgence would seem to be the height of indiscretion. But the cough was completely gone, no room having been left for it in the development of every muscle of my body by the handling of the "gee-pole."

At these times we would pay our respects with some bitterness to the man who had made this strange and lonely trail, though in better moments we were willing to admit that he was a pioneer and a pathfinder. As soon as the ice would bear him, when the wind had drifted the snow here and there and lifted the slush ice up to be frozen into rifts, with his dogs and sleds he set his face toward the coast, winding in and out between these rifts, back and forth across the stream and along its banks, wherever he could find the best footing; and all who came afterward followed in his footsteps. He was making a path for himself and not for us, and it was to his interest, if not to ours, to have it as crooked as the track of a snake, and on the most crooked of rivers at that.

With the falling of the water as the winter advanced the ice was rent with cracks. It fell away from the shores, leaving cakes on end and fissures. You must toil up one side of a pyramid to slide down the other; you held your sled up literally at an angle of forty-five degrees, and sometimes you dropped into the fissures up to your hips, for the thin covering of snow often made them invisible even in the daytime. Yet to step away from the trail was like stepping off a bad corduroy road into a swamp.

In the darkness the trained eye of the master had to trust to the halt and whine of the brave little "Dude" when we came to a place where the surface water was deep or the ice had given way entirely. While the master went ahead with a pole to make soundings, Fritz seized the opportunity to roll a cigarette and to say, in a drawl, as he sat on his sled, resting:

"If I were in town, I would call a cab."

Jack had discarded his boots with sharp

pegs—the three of us had worn boots since it became warmer—to put on moccasins. These were soon wet and quickly froze, giving him a sole of ice with which to walk on ice. In utter exhaustion, once the big fellow threw himself upon his "gee-pole," and gasped out something about not caring whether he went any farther or not. Then he added:

"Well, we'll outlast this trail, anyway. I guess I'll light my pipe."

Confessedly, I was rather glad of the incident. It is good to see giants nod when you have nodded yourself. Only on the previous day, over a mile of sidling trail, leaning on my sled to keep it from upsetting, and righting it when it did upset, I had momentarily, I am ashamed to say, turned cyric and protester.

An hour before dawn a scimitar of light shot across the heavens, followed by broadswords, fans, daggers, waves, and streaks of light, dancing sometimes in playful panic, and again moving in a sweep of dignity. With the aurora borealis as our candle, we passed around Freeman's Point, built a fire for luncheon in a cove and enjoyed keenly the fact that we were half-way to Dawson.

As we moved on slowly at dawn to make a few more miles before camping, we saw the penalty of this savage run which human stubbornness had insisted on making in the blood left on the trail by the wounded feet of our dogs. Jack at once covered them with the moccasins which he had brought for the purpose. It was plain enough that the continuance of night-marches was unfeasible if we desired our brave steeds to hold out as far as Dawson. While the sled slid easier at night, the excrescences of ice were as sharp as lances, and though the mushy trail of mid-day made the sled harder to pull, it was like a cushion for a wounded foot. We compromised upon a portion of both evils by determining to start at dawn and travel as fast and as long as we could, practicably. This gave only seven or eight hours on the road as against the twelve or more that we had originally planned, and in order to make the most of them we made the sacrifice for the dogs' sake of drinking ice-water for our luncheon instead of taking the time to boil chocolate. Fritz preferring to handle the "gee-pole," and I pre-

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ferring to assist in keeping the equilibrium of the big sled by holding the handles at the rear, each settled down to this as his definite labor.

We now had more time for our camps; more time for our pipes of relaxation as we sat on our beds around Jack's bonfires, after the dogs were fed and dinner was eaten. On one of these nights we were talking of ambitions.

"As a boy, I wanted to drive a street-car," said Fritz. "When I grew older they still called me Freddy, and I made pictures for a living. That is enough to ruin any man; and, foreseeing this, I concluded that I'd live on flapjacks and go unwashed and be called 'pardner,' or Pete, or Bill, or make baking-powder dough, or anything, till I found a good placer mine. Then I'm going around the world, smoking the best brand of Turkish cigarettes, and looking at other people's pictures."

Jack had run away from home at the age of thirteen to the land of the Indians that had been revealed to him in a dime novel secreted in a hay-mow, and had earned his own living ever since. Meagre as was his early education, he had picked up a surprising amount of information from reading and from association. His eye was that of a scout; his knowledge of birds and animals that of a naturalist; his love of flowers that of a sentimentalist. He had varied his life as a cow-boy by many other occupations. At one time he had been a private coachman in Omaha, just to see how it would seem.

"I was gettin' pretty sick of the job," he explained, "when the old lady I drove about leaned over to me one day, confidentially. 'I'm goin' to get you a fine livery to wear,' she said. Then I realized how low I had fallen, and that evening I was a free man again."

He was longer on the Government survey than in any other employment, rising until he filled a position of considerable responsibility. Possibly it was then that he learned the ethics of camp-life; more likely they were innate. He adhered to his own soap, his own towel, and his own bedding, and was more observant of all the niceties of life than are most of the men who wear the linen collar that he despised. In all his seventeen years of wandering his

greatest source of sorrow was that he had never made enough money, according to his ideas, to return home, though his pay had been as high as a hundred and fifty dollars a month. He must have a few thousands, and treat the little Pennsylvania village that was his birthplace to such extravagance as it had never seen before. If he made a "stake" in the Klondyke, he had planned to drive right up to the old folks' door with his team of huskies and a little red cart, distributing candy to the children as the procession moved forward.

When we had passed one point which we recognized as a name on the map, we looked forward from day to day, as we lessened the distance, until we should arrive at another. In camp we compared our opinions of how many miles we had made that day, and soon our estimates became surprisingly accurate. After leaving Five Fingers, all our thoughts were bent on reaching Fort Selkirk, where the Pelly, a great river of itself, joins the Yukon. The trail for this distance was better than for the fifty miles that had preceded it; and, moreover, our new plan of shorter hours and harder work was succeeding admirably.

It was at Fort Selkirk that we met Mr. Pettit—pale-faced and so slight that one wondered how he had ever been able to bear the journey into the country—in charge of a trading-post, with no companions except a large camp of Indians. He had had nothing to sell for more than a year, no steamer having come up the river to bring him a stock of supplies in the summer of 1897.

Here we ate the last of our canned delicacies, some plain sausages, and the memory of that luxurious dinner will ever be sweet. To add to our joy, Mr. Pettit came to tell us, just as we had finished the last mouthful, that the Indians were greatly excited by the arrival of the news that one of the tribe, Ulick, had killed ten caribou and two moose some thirty miles down the river. We made careful calculations as to how much tobacco we could spare, and kept a sharp lookout for Ulick, whom we met with his family dragging some of the moose back to camp. For forty-five cents' worth of tobacco we secured thirty pounds of steak for ourselves and the dogs. To

offers of as high as a dollar a pound for more, he merely made the reply :

"Got heap money! Want 'baccy!'"

Your husky dog is no vegetarian. The strength that fresh meat gave to our team led us to feed nearly all of our supply to them.

The height and the character of the mountains towering over our heads told us that we were coming into the region of the Rockies. Every turn of the river brought into view a panorama of low, wooded islands (made in later times by a change of current); of islands that were Cyclopean masses thrown up by chaos, and the nesting-places of eagles; of mountains on either shore, whose strata seemed to have been kneaded and stirred when soft as dough, and afterward, upon solidifying, had been rent by convulsions of the earth's crust.

But one was too busy with the handles of the sled fully to enjoy scenery. He only knew that his vista seemed to be frowning upon the impudence of him and his sled and dogs breaking in upon great solitudes. Thankfully, the weather was more in our favor and the trail was harder and not so sidling. At times it was as smooth as a skating-rink for a few hundred yards, where it was protected from the sun by the shadow of the mountains and the forests; again, there was glare ice, where we might ride for a little distance, jesting merrily about private equipages and driving-parks; and, again, we drove flocks of wild ducks away from open places, making us regret that we had only revolvers with us. Far over our heads we saw great flocks of wild swans and wild geese moving northward against the background of the blue sky in stately procession, reminding us that summer was near at hand. At 2 A.M. the thermometer was at from 10 to 20 degrees below zero; at noon, 80 degrees above, and the crust at dawn had become like porridge. I had one ear blistered by the frost and the other by the sun in the same day.

But we little minded these extremes; for the trail continued to be good, until one morning we arrived at the cluster of cabins called Stewart City, at the mouth of the Stewart River, where we rested for a day. Of the inmates of the cabins we bought enough rice to piece out the ra-

tions of our dogs. It took us six days to make the remaining seventy-five miles to Dawson, though now our outfit, including bedding and kit-bags, did not weigh more than two hundred pounds. The weather at night had suddenly moderated, as if the arctic winter, after a spasmodic resistance, had given way entirely to the tropical summer. Henceforth, it was needless to put up our tent, and we slept and cooked entirely in the open, drying our wet footwear by the heat of the sun in the late afternoon.

On the afternoon of the fourth day out from Stewart, when the dogs pulled up after one of the rushes they were never too tired to make on scenting a camp, we looked up to see some figures standing on a pile of logs which they were cutting for a raft of timber for a Dawson saw-mill.

"How are ye?" they called. "Goin' to town?"

We had reached the suburbs!

"Well," replied Jack, "we've been thinkin' some of it. How far is it?"

"'Bout twenty miles. But you won't make it. The ice is likely to go out any minute."

On the day following we passed still another camp of rafters, who said that the river was open in front of Dawson. They advised us to make camp and accompany them when navigation opened.

"We'll be old inhabitants by that time," said Jack.

Every creek flowing into the river was a torrent, eating up the ice and flooding its surface. However, we were confident of reaching our destination on the morrow, though we had to desert our sleds, put some flapjacks and slices of bacon in our pockets, and climb over the mountain which hid "town" from view.

Our last camp was on a wooded island where some prospector had built a brush-house. Jack's bonfire, especially large in honor of the occasion, extended to this house, and we thought it rather good fun that we had to save our bedding from the flames. But our jubilation was not unmixed with sadness. We should not make another journey together; and we had been good comrades, always venting our anger, when it insisted upon expression, upon our sleds, and never blaming one another.

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kempt; our trousers were the color of mahogany; but we felt strong enough to go up the side of a mountain on the run, and we had been so near to Nature that we could truly claim her for next-door neighbor.

"We can sleep as long as we want tomorrow," said Fritz, pulling his robe over him; "and we won't care whether it is going to freeze at night or not."

"And we won't have wet feet," Jack added. "I guess it's been twenty days since they wasn't sopping 'fore we'd been out two hours, and that slush does feel rather clammy when the sun's blisterin' overhead."

Ten miles in ten hours was the record of our last day's travel, over the worst trail we had encountered. At dusk we rounded an island, and to our right, on a small flat across the river (which here had been opened by the current of the Klondyke), we saw the cluster of cabins which was the pilgrim's Mecca. There was glare ice, however, above the Klondyke across to the little suburb of Dawson, Klondyke City. For the first time in many days we rode on our sleds, finishing our journey in triumph.

"Don't you know that it's too late to travel on the river?" asked the foremost man of the little crowd that came out to meet us.

"Yes," replied Jack, "and we've just made up our minds to quit."

Four days later, as if it had broken away all along the shores at the same moment, the ice moved on toward the sea like a great white procession, halted now and then by a jam, but not for long.

"It's a pleasure to see that trail go by," was Jack's comment, as he watched it from our cabin-door. "I only wish I might pay it back in its own kind by tripping it up a few times."

A GLIMPSE OF THE MINES

At this season of the year the inhabitants of Dawson were passing out of the chrysalis of fur caps into soiled, broad-brimmed hats resurrected from cabin-shelves; and out of winter clothing generally into what remained of their last summer's clothing. Along the thawing bog called the main

street, littered and odorous from sanitary neglect, were two rows of saloons and gambling-halls, with mining brokers' offices and the stores of shrewd speculators in food-supplies, who always had one can of condensed milk for \$2.50, one can of butter for \$3, and one pound of sugar for \$1.50, and assured you that they were the last in the country. To look out across the flat toward the mountains was to see scattered cabins and piles of tin cans, which at once let one into the culinary secrets of an isolated community composed largely of men. At the restaurants, bacon and beans and coffee cost \$2.50.

With a tiny can of cocoa, which I pounced upon in a store as if it were an Elzevir in a junk-heap, and a few staples bought at extravagant prices, we were able to prepare a superior meal in the cabin that I had leased. But this was not until we had slept gloriously for sixteen hours. Then, having had a bath and a change of underclothes, and, therefore, not being afraid to face the world, I started for the mines.

In winter and in summer the trail leads up the Klondyke to the mouth of Bonanza, three miles from Dawson, and thence up Bonanza to the working-claims, about three miles farther on. In the spring, when the currents are swollen, you must go over a high mountain by a path in the soft snow. If you have a pack, this is hard work. On the way I met a blue-faced old fellow—by his look, if not by his limp, he had the scurvy—who promptly put me in my proper social status.

"Are ye a Cheechawko?" he asked.

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Well, then, ye are, and the river must 'a' broke. Any man's a Cheechawko until he's been in the country when the ice goes out. In the old days we could lick the Cheechawkos into shape; larn 'em to leave their latchstrings out fur a passin' stranger when they was away from hum, and larn 'em to eat what they wanted and to use the best blanket in a cabin, but to lug nothin' away. Fifty thousand of 'em, they say—clerks and farmers and dudes. They're too many fur us. Civilization's here, and it's a case of lockin' up yer dust after this. But, young man, ye can't be an old-timer, never! Ye can't be an old-timer lest ye've lived in the camps in the

old days when a man was a man and his neighbor's brother."

And without giving me time to reply to his little lecture, he hobbled on toward the hospital.

Cheechawko is the Indian word for stranger, or, more literally, "tenderfoot," which has come into general use in the Klondyke; and toward the Cheechawko, bringing in the more penurious ways of the outside world, along with ignorance of mining, the old-timer feels a genuine resentment. I was glad of the opportunity to see the veterans ere the recruits had arrived.

Before an Indian saw a tiny nugget glistening in the gravel on the bank of Bonanza, both Bonanza and Eldorado creeks were favorite pastures of moose and caribou. Now they are as expressive of man's handiwork at its worst as the rear of a row of tenement-houses. For that Indian had for a brother-in-law a white out-cast, who had made him the uncle of many half-breed children, and, moreover, had told him of a god worshipped by the outside world which had not been mentioned by the missionaries. "Siawash George" Cormack took the credit for the discovery from the Indian, and passed the word along to the mining-camps at Forty Mile and Circle City. As money plays an important part in the native politics of Alaska, Cormack's ambition to be the chief of the Stick tribe seemed near fulfilment. But his wife, an Indian princess, has determined to abjure her royal rights for the ways of civilization; and civilization is obliging and will sell to her as well as to the white women of the new Eldorado chocolate caramels and striped silks.

The miners from Forty Mile and Circle City staked all of Bonanza, and then staked in contempt a small tributary of Bonanza, in their phrase, a "pup," which they called Eldorado; and Eldorado turned out to be the richest placer creek of its size on record. How the gold came to Eldorado and Bonanza, whose wealth so belies their aspect, is for the geologist to say. Old-timers, who are fond of formulating theories over their cabin-fires, think that glacial action carried it to the creeks from The Dome, a huge mountain in which Eldorado and Bonanza have their headwaters.

Nine months after the discovery was made, the outside world heard of it. Such of the pilgrims attracted by the great news as were able to reach Dawson in the autumn of 1897 found that all creeks rising on the slopes of The Dome, and all other creeks that had as yet proven worth the working, had already been staked by the old-timers. Having staked the remaining creeks in a radius of from thirty to sixty miles on affidavits of having found "color," some of the new-comers rested in their cabins, eating their winter's supply of food; others found employment on the working-claims; and still others departed over the ice to escape starvation. As the humor of the saloon goes, there was left for the on-coming host of May and June an expanse of unexplored territory sufficient to keep a thousand times their number prospecting busily for a few centuries, but no gold at all, unless they could find it for themselves.

It was just on the eve of harvest-time when I first visited the creeks. In a day or two the flow of water from the gulches where the snow lay thickest would make a head sufficient to wash the yellow grain out of the dumps. In the four miles of Eldorado and the ten miles of Bonanza, lines of flumes and their dependent sluice-boxes—the lumber for which had been dragged from the Dawson saw-mill by husky dogs or cut with whip-saws—formed a network around the string of cabins occupied by claim-owners and their workmen and around piles of clayish-colored dirt, thawed out inch by inch during the short winter days, which contained virgin wealth amounting to nearly ten million dollars. The rounded hill-sides seemed as bare as the palm of the hand, scarred by broad streaks from top to bottom, showing where firewood and the timber for building the cabins and for keeping up the fires in the drifts had been slid down.

If you descended by the ladders into the holes beside the dumps to the drifts, you soon comprehended that reaping the harvest, once you have a claim, is not so easy as picking wild cranberries. It is dogged work to build fires day after day, running the risk of suffocation and permanent injury to the eyes by the smoke, and pulling up the dirt, bucketful after bucketful, by means of a windlass, with the thermometer forty below zero and your din-

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The Main Street of Dawson.

ner to cook. In one spot of three or four square feet the nuggets are so thick that you can pick them out by hand as a farmer's boy picks potatoes out of a hill. In juxtaposition there may be as many more square feet which are not considered worth thawing and sluicing; and so the drifts seem like the path of a man trying to make his way to the light in darkness. From two to three feet above the real bed-rock is the false bed-rock, a stratum of stone broken into angular fragments apparently by some great forces passing overhead. Between the two is the best paying dirt, and occasionally here is found, perhaps with particles of gold sticking to it, the tusk of a mammoth who was the ruler in the valley before the days of the moose.

Once the water comes gushing down the flumes and the sluices, the men, who have been lounging in front of their cabins in the sunshine as they waited for it, pick up their shovels and begin peeling off the dirt of the dumps as fast as it is thawed by the sun and toss it into the boxes. They work by night as well as by day, if there is enough water and enough soft dirt. Of a sudden the sun beat down with such intensity—110 degrees Fahren-

heit, with great drifts of snow in the gulches—for three or four days, that the little creeks became torrents, dams had to be opened, and sluice-boxes with goodly sums in them floated away from their moorings. Temporarily, there was much more water than was needed. Only too soon was the loss of the energy that had gone to waste brought home. With the snow gone and rains the only source of supply, the current dwindled until many claims had not a single sluice-head, and some had not finished washing their dumps by the end of August, instead of, as anticipated, by the end of June.

When the "clean-up" was made, you might feast your eyes on the consummation of the harvest. The water was shut off and the cleats in the boxes were lifted and rinsed, leaving the result of the day's work, which glistened with yellow particles. Just a small stream was turned on by the man at the water-gates (who was probably making the most of his rest from shovelling by smoking a pipe of cut plug) and then turned off again, or on a little more or off a little less, while the most expert miner on the claim pushed the speckled sand-pile back and forth with a

common brush-broom until all the foreign particles had floated off, except a sprinkling of the heavy black sand which is invariably the companion of placer gold. Three or four or five thousand dollars—perhaps ten or fifteen or twenty thousand, if the "clean-up" be on Eldorado—which is three or four or five double handfuls, is put into a pan with an ordinary fire-shovel. The sight is bound to make your blood run faster, and to color your reason with an epic enthusiasm. That little yellow pile, you know at a glance, will stand the test of chemicals. Once you have seen a "color" in the bottom of a pan with the black sand following it around like a faithful servant, you can never again be deceived by the false glitter of any other particles. You would know it if you saw it between cobblestones in Broadway, or if it were no larger than a pin-head at the bottom of a trout-pool.

For the moment, the yellow pile makes you feel like seeking a claim of your own and harvesting its treasure for yourself. But when you look at the miry path along the base of the mountain by the creek-side, and think of following it with a pack on your back until it is no more, and a wilderness begins; think of passing on over the mountains until you come to what you consider a likely place, and thawing through thirty feet of earth at the rate of a foot a day in the haphazard possibility of finding "pay dirt," you conclude that the poetry of the thing can be better appreciated by sitting on someone else's dump.

Besides, as one who did a little prospecting on his own account and is proud to say that he found a few "colors"—which is just what anyone else can do in the Klondyke region—I observed that the recent arrivals of Nestorian prospectors who took a delight in quoting to you from Emerson when their hands were reeking

with clay and their gray locks were sticking through the crowns of old hats, do not like Alaska, though free to admit its material opportunities. They could not be weaned from the temperate climate and the skies of California, and were determined to return to their old stamping-grounds, where any honest prospector can get a "grubstake" from a speculative city man, and needs nothing more to make him happy and free.

So be it; and the more is it fitting that the true Alaskan hermits, members of the early communities of gold-seekers in the Yukon valley, who bore the brunt of the robust business of pioneering, should occupy the cabins of the masters on the Eldorado and the Bonanza claims. Graduates of colleges and universities, who work for them with pick and shovel for a dollar

an hour, did not come into the country until after the great "strike," and must take the consequences. You feel a real sympathy with those of the old-timers who sold for a few hundred dollars, before they were prospected, claims on Eldorado that will produce nearly a million. For my part, I cannot overcome my strong antipathy to the Canadian Government because it placed a royalty of ten per cent. on the output of claims and no tax at all on the saloons, while it sent as expert inspectors to collect this royalty a keeper of a livery stable and a captain of a whaler, whose fitness for their positions was a political "pull." These and most of the other civil officials, so far as I could learn, were amassing fortunes at the expense of the honest prospector.

On the rounded hills above the valleys of Eldorado and Bonanza were many fresh mounds of earth, as if the population of the Klondyke, man by man, was digging graves—and graves of many ambitions these were, in all truth.

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a few hundred square feet which are foot for foot as rich as the bed of Eldorado. I enjoyed nothing better than to spend an afternoon with Joe Staley and Billy Deddering, the discoverers of the richest "bench," that of French Gulch, who took \$187 out of their first pan on bed-rock. Joe is a gaunt bachelor of forty-five years; Billy is a little German, round-faced and satisfied to accept things as they come, or their absence if they do not come.

The bench claim is, in fact, the only "poor man's claim." As against the creek claim, which requires sluice-boxes and wages for your workmen through the winter before you can realize upon it, the sun in summer will thaw the dirt on a bench claim; and then you need only a rocker to "take your money out with your own hands," as the expression goes.

I think that Joe Staley was the happiest man in the Klondyke on the day the discovery was made. He did not go to "town" until he had enough to pay off the mortgage on his mother's farm in Ohio, and he looked forward to the time when his wanderings for twenty years as a prospector should be at an end, and he might settle down to a peaceful existence on the old homestead. But one day, in Dawson, when we had eaten fresh eggs and other luxuries which had just been brought in from the "outside," as he pushed his plate away from him, he shook his head dubiously.



Putting the Gold in the Pan After the Cleaner.



Joe Staley and Billy Deddering.



Two Brothers who have been "Pardners" for Forty Years.

"I dunno as I'll be so happy as I thought when I settle down among the cows and chickens," he mused. "This grub don't taste the way I thought 'twould. Darned if I don't like the beans and bacon that I have up at the claim better; and I'll be glad to be back carryin' dirt to the rocker for Billy to-morrow. They say once the gold fever's in a fellow's bones it sticks like the rheumatiz, and I believe it. I reckon it's the only thing I'll be satisfied with in this life."

One of the claims near Joe's, which is even richer than his, was sold for a hundred dollars a few days after it was staked, and there had followed the stampede to the new "strike" the usual reaction in faith in its value. The fortunate purchaser washed out a thousand dollars in the first day with his rocker, and in his patch of hill-side, one hundred feet square, there is probably all of \$75,000. Another claim, and perhaps more valuable yet, was staked by a runaway boy from the East. When I met him one day, he was laughing over the joke he had played on the old folks at home. For the first time in five years he had written to them.

"I just told 'em," he said, "I'd been in the Klondyke—they don't even know that—and I'd be out on the last steamer with fifty thousand, cold."

By mid-June more than thirty thousand Cheechawkos were in Dawson. They had the satisfaction of looking in at the saloons where much of the gold from the "clean-up" was being spent; of having pointed out to them the leading gambler, and that shrewd Scotchman, Alexander McDonald, who has risen in two years from daily wages to the ownership of fifty claims, and whom they call "King of the Klondyke;" of seeing Dawson nod when the King nodded. Only this excitement did not long atone for other disappointments. They went up the creeks by the trails running at one side of the claims.

Sometimes they mistook mica sparkling in the sand of the rivulets for gold. The old-timers laughed at them. Wherever they found anything worth staking on account of contiguity to a good claim, it had been staked months ago. They returned to Dawson in the state of mind of one who has seen the sights, and is a little discouraged to find himself so far from home.

The claim-owners sitting in front of Miss Mulrooney's hotel with full stomachs, smoking cigars and waiting for rain, used to guy the new-comers as they passed with their packs, their new shovels, and their new pans. At this season everyone travels at night, the damp mist rising from the frozen ground being more bearable than the beating sun and the mosquitoes of the daytime.

Miss Mulrooney had been a Cheechawko herself, and she took the Cheechawko's part. When she went to the Klondyke a steamship company lost a good stewardess, and she became an employer instead of an employee. She hired the one surviving mule in Dawson for \$20 a day, and personally superintended his labors in dragging the logs to the site at the junction of Eldorado and Bonanza—the centre of the community of wealth, as she foresaw—called The Forks, where she built a hotel of no less than two stories. Her rates were the highest in the Klondyke, \$3.50 a meal; but she had secured the best food before the cry of famine was heard and prices rose, and you felt that her blankets—do not think that we ever had sheets—were the cleanest in that region. Thanks to her tact and the miners' respect for her, no public-house was so orderly. As a group of her guests was sitting on the bench by her door, when the everlasting light of the arctic summer seemed to have taken hold of our nerves so that we could not sleep, she said:

"I'm thinkin' few will ever mistake the Klondyke for a pleasure-resort."

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